United Nations A/63/296

General Assembly

Distr.: General
18 August 2008

Original: English

Sixty-third session
Item 52 (b) of the provisional agenda*
Sustainable development

Follow-up to and implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report provides a comprehensive review of the continuing efforts of the United Nations system, the international community and small island developing States to operationalize the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. The report also gives an account of the activities of small island developing States day during the sixteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development and includes the most recent initiatives to promote the mainstreaming of the Mauritius Strategy in small island developing States' sustainable development plans.

* A/63/150 and Corr.1.

08-46344 (E) 120908

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I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, by its resolution 62/191, welcomed the renewed commitment of the international community to the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States[1] and urged Governments and all relevant international and regional organizations, United Nations funds, programmes, specialized agencies and regional economic commissions, international financial institutions, the Global Environment Facility, as well as other intergovernmental organizations and major groups, to take timely actions to ensure the effective implementation of and follow-up to the Mauritius Declaration[2] and the Mauritius Strategy,[3] including the further operationalization of concrete projects and programmes.

2. The Assembly called upon the international community to support the efforts of small island developing States to adapt to the adverse effects of climate change, including through the provision of financing, capacity-building and the transfer of appropriate technology; and to enhance its support for the implementation of the programme of work on island biodiversity[4] adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biodiversity at its eighth meeting, in 2006.

3. The Assembly requested the agencies of the United Nations system to ensure the mainstreaming of the Mauritius Strategy in their work programmes and reiterated its request to the Secretary-General to ensure that the Small Island Developing States Unit is sufficiently and sustainably staffed.

4. The present report describes progress made towards furthering implementation of the Mauritius Strategy in accordance with resolution 62/191. The relevant bodies of the United Nations system, including the regional commissions, as well as regional intergovernmental organizations of small island developing States, civil society and the Governments of States Members of the United Nations were consulted in its preparation. The report also gives an account of the one-day meeting for small island developing States held during the sixteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

II. Action to further the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy

A. Thematic review by the Commission on Sustainable Development

5. At its thirteenth session, the Commission on Sustainable Development decided that during its review sessions every other year, one day would be devoted to monitoring implementation of the Mauritius Strategy, focusing on the cluster of

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[1] *Report of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, Bridgetown, Barbados, 25 April-6 May 1994* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.94.I.18 and corrigenda), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

[2] *Report of the International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, Port Louis, Mauritius, 10-14 January 2005* (United Nations publication Sales No. E.05.II.A.4 and corrigendum), chap. I, resolution 1, annex I.

[3] Ibid., annex II.

[4] UNEP/CBD/COP/8/31, annex I, decision VIII/I, annex.

thematic issues under review by the Commission at the time. The second of these one-day review sessions was held in May 2008, during the sixteenth session of the Commission, with specific attention given to the progress made and the continuing challenges and constraints faced by small island developing States in their efforts to achieve sustainable development, giving focus to the issues of drought, desertification, sustainable land management, rural development and agriculture.

6. The review of this thematic cluster in respect of small island developing States was informed by the report prepared by the Secretary-General for the Commission (E/CN.17/2008/9), which gave full consideration to the interdependent relationship of land, agriculture, rural development, drought and desertification in small island developing States, given their size, limited land and narrow natural resource bases and the fragility of their terrestrial and coastal ecosystems. The report addressed the challenges in sustainable land management in small island developing States, taking into account the issues impacting rural development and agriculture and their structural and environmental vulnerability, exacerbated by the varied impacts of climate change and sea-level rise, natural disasters, urbanization and globalization.

7. The small island developing States used the opportunity to underscore the importance of regular review of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States as well as the need to focus on its implementation. The Commission's mandate as the forum for that review was reiterated. The importance of the preservation of an exclusive day for small island developing States during the review sessions was emphasized.

8. Review of the implementation of the Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy was addressed in a general debate. Concern was expressed at the slow rate of implementation. It was noted that while the small island developing States themselves had made some progress at the national and regional levels in building the institutional capacity for sustainable development, formulating strategies and action plans and carrying out policy reforms, many of them continued to encounter constraints which impeded their sustainable development. These included limited technical, financial and human resources.

9. A review of the thematic issues being considered by the Commission was undertaken through panel-led discussions. Participants used the opportunity afforded by the day to define the issues under consideration from a small island developing States perspective. Panel discussants characterized most small island developing States as land-scarce, as having limited freshwater cycles, variable soil fertility and fragile genetic diversity and as dominated by an ocean climate. In combination these factors are known to intensify drought and desertification, especially in atolls, which can have naturally high rates of erosion and quick water run-off due to their small size. Delegates of the Pacific small island developing States supported this view, noting the seriousness of drought in their region and its negative impact on sustainable development.

10. Delegations also stressed the vulnerability of small island developing States, exacerbated by the effects of climate change including sea-level rise, coral bleaching due to warming seas, increasing threats to freshwater supply, the propagation of invasive alien species and the increased frequency and intensity of cyclones, hurricanes and other extreme weather events. The need for effective land-use strategies to address the increasing pressure on limited land resources in small island developing States through strengthened human resource and institutional

capacity and watershed, coastal zone and land use change management was considered.

11. Attention was given to the impact of invasive species on land degradation across the small island developing States. It was noted that fast-growing and water-intensive invasive flora can aggravate erosion, drought and desertification by crowding out endemic vegetation and exhausting soil and water resources. Alien fauna such as rats and snakes also have a large economic impact. In addition to threatening endemic biodiversity, such pests have also caused millions of dollars worth of damage to telecommunication infrastructure, crops and the tourism industry. In response, many States are formulating strategies to eradicate and prevent the introduction of invasive species.

12. It was noted that almost all small island developing States are witnessing the rapid migration of their people from their outer islands and hinterlands to urban areas. Panellists demonstrated how this demographic trend is linked to watershed conversion and urban development, and is in turn accelerating land and coastal-marine degradation. This is especially the case when municipalities are unable to meet rising demands for housing, zoning and service provision due to lack of capacity, regulation and enforcement mechanisms. Delegations also underscored the challenges that urbanization posed to development not only in small island developing States but in a number of other developing countries as well.

13. Discussions focused on agritourism and a range of niche markets which offered scope for the development of rural industries. Tourism was highlighted as a growth sector that provided opportunities for direct revenue transactions with rural communities, thus contributing to the revitalization of agriculture and rural development, strengthening food security in small island developing States and promoting the well-being of rural communities. Both developed and developing country partners cited examples of successful agritourism ventures, noting the benefits that accrued to other sectors. One positive linkage described included innovative product development and the pursuit of new niche markets.

14. It was also highlighted that agricultural diversification, by broadening small island developing States' traditionally narrow export economies, could improve the resilience of the rural sector to economic shocks and natural disasters. Delegations reiterated their support for small island developing States in that regard, offering to share their best practices, lessons learned and technology in addition to financial and other resources. There were also calls to further exploit ecotourism to boost rural development and ensure cultural continuity in the development process. It was also highlighted that the sustainable management of fisheries, forestry and agriculture and freshwater resources was important to improving food security and access.

15. Almost all delegations touched on the seriousness of the impacts of climate change and sea-level rise not only on drought, desertification and land management, but also on the overall sustainable development of small island developing States. Many participants highlighted the fact that global warming is expected to increase droughts and wildfires, as well as resulting in stronger storms, landslides and erosion. It is anticipated that warmer seas will undergo more coral bleaching and deadly algae bloom events. Participants underscored that resettlement from low-lying lands and outer islands was inevitable and had already affected planning. Many therefore supported the integration of climate change adaptation into land,

watershed and coastal zone management. Some countries pointed out that reforestation, sustainable land use, zoning and other sustainable measures could also improve resiliency to climate change. There were many calls for increased assistance.

16. Noting that successful rural development in small island developing States was closely linked to governance, delegations stated that as a first step some countries must ensure access to clean drinking water, energy and food security. Panellists underscored the critical need to forge connections among local, national and international policies and programmes, as well as the need for more action and implementation. It was noted that a bottom-up approach is key to improving rural livelihoods, and that responsibility for outcomes should be shared and community ownership of the development process encouraged. Because the sustainable development options for rural communities in small island developing States are limited, rural communities need empowerment, participatory assessment and training to build their capacity for helping themselves. Delegations noted that sustainable natural resource management, consideration of culture and land tenure systems and the empowering of women and youth were all important components of rural development strategies in small island developing States. It was highlighted that good policy is rooted in the priorities of rural people.

17. Many delegations emphasized the linkages between the panel discussion and small island developing States' vulnerability to rising food and energy prices. It was noted that land degradation resulting in declining agricultural productivity coupled with rising international prices could have major impacts on the ability of States to attain many of their development goals. It was noted that assistance was needed to build the human, institutional, technological and financial capacity necessary to stem losses, if not to confront a crisis, in human and economic security. Many recalled the seriousness of recent declines in official development assistance and other resources directed to small island developing States, while some development partners reiterated and announced their support for implementation of the Mauritius Strategy. There were also calls for a fair trading regime to take into account the special needs of small island developing States.

18. Speakers highlighted the contribution to the sustainable development of small island developing States through cooperation among the various stakeholders made. International partnerships, including public-private partnerships and South-South cooperation, were recognized for their potential to contribute to the mobilization of resources in support of small island developing States.

19. Appreciation was widely expressed for the opportunity afforded by the small island developing States day to review the achievements and continuing challenges faced by those States in respect of the thematic cluster. The ongoing efforts of small island developing States and their commitment to innovative action were noted. Commitments of continued support for the sustainable development efforts of those States were expressed. The need for strengthening the Small Island Developing States Unit in the Secretariat, in accordance with the relevant General Assembly resolutions, to support the implementation of the Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy was underscored.

20. In an effort to demonstrate the rich potential in the range of products from agriculture and rural enterprise produced in small island developing States, the Small Island Developing States Unit, in collaboration with the regional

intergovernmental organizations of small island developing States and with the generous support of the Government of Ireland, organized an agro-industry exposition on small island developing States day.

21. The exhibit was launched by the Chairman of the Alliance of Small Island States and the Government of Ireland. The display highlighted the food, beverages, art, craft and other indigenous products of rural enterprises in small island developing States and demonstrated the role of culture in promoting public awareness, as well as the importance of the sustainable management of natural resources in small island developing States. A representative collection of products from the three small island developing States regions (Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Sea; Caribbean; and Pacific) showcased the creativity and potential of the islands' agricultural, artisanal and cultural industries including agricultural and fishery products; sugar, rum, dried/tinned foods and tinned fish; fine art, ceramics and pottery; basketry and straw works; leather goods; jewellery and metal craft; natural and herbal therapy products; and woodcraft and home furnishings.

22. Several side events and partnership events were also organized. The Commonwealth Secretariat launched its publications entitled *Sustainable Development of Small States: Issues, Challenges and Prospects* and *Small States Economic Review and Basic Statistics Volume 12*; the launch included presentations on resilience building of small States, financing of sustainable development and national sustainable development planning.

23. The Small Island Developing States Unit, in cooperation with the Sea Level Rise Foundation, brought together representatives of small island developing States in a side event to explore links between climate change and the emerging crisis of global food security and how this will affect those States. This side event focused on the impact of rising energy and food prices, as well as how climate change and sea-level rise will affect the small island developing States' ability to produce food. It also revisited issues highlighted at the 2005 ministerial event, including the need to strengthen existing regional programmes for food security; capacity-building; mainstreaming disaster risk management and climate change adaptation into agriculture and fisheries policies; and improving the performance of agriculture and agriculture-related activities by promoting agro-enterprises. In addition, a presentation was given on land policy, administration and management, stressing the importance of a national spatial data infrastructure and the use of technology in sustainable land administration and management. Partnership events on new technologies for sustainable development in small island developing States and on creative partnering to enhance sustainable development and conservation were also organized and were well attended.

B. Secretariat support

24. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs, through its Small Island Developing States Unit, continued to facilitate the coordination of system-wide implementation of the small island developing States agenda and to provide substantive support and advisory services to States with a view to advancing the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy. Meetings of the inter-agency consultative group on small island developing States were held to promote a more coordinated

and informed approach to Mauritius Strategy implementation among the organizations of the United Nations system, regional intergovernmental organizations of small island developing States and other partners.

25. Preparations continue for the dynamic redesign and expansion of the Unit's website, SIDSNet. In the past year, the website has been fully migrated to the Department's servers, and plans for a second-generation site are being developed. SIDSNet was designed to significantly improve small island developing States' use of information and communications technology to promote wider understanding and international recognition of the challenges they face because of their economic and environmental vulnerability. SIDSNet has sought to provide opportunities for regular contact among small island developing States of the three regions; strengthened interregional exchange; building capacity at the national level by educating stakeholders and mobilizing experts; and facilitating research, data collection and information sharing on best practices in priority areas such as environmental management, micro-enterprise development, health, education and skills training, climate change response, freshwater and sanitation and tourism management. It is expected that the revamped website will provide enhanced services to small island developing States and the wider international community.

26. The Division for Sustainable Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs continued to make available assistance to the 14 small island developing States of the Pacific for capacity-building and institutional strengthening by supporting the development of national sustainable development strategies. Since its inauguration, the project has facilitated reviews of existing national and sectoral development strategies; broad exchange of experience on strategic policymaking and a participatory approach to decision-making; and the building of consensus among Pacific small island developing States on the most appropriate application of the United Nations guidelines for the formulation of national sustainable development strategies. An important output has been support to the Pacific States for the development of national sustainable development strategies, or their equivalent, and where such strategies already existed, support to improve and strengthen them.

27. The Division proposes to pursue during 2008-2009 the organization of three subregional capacity-building workshops in collaboration with the UNDP pacific subregional centre and the ESCAP subregional office in Fiji to identify the specificities of the subregions and focus on practical ways of incorporating sustainable development concerns into national planning, including how to incorporate and seek coherence with commitments made in the Mauritius Strategy, the Pacific Plan and the Millennium Development Goals. It is proposed that the workshops would target national focal points in planning ministries, as well as representatives of other key relevant ministries. The project will also continue to support the implementation of project activities for the implementation of national sustainable development strategies.

28. The Division also organized a Caribbean workshop on sanitation, entitled "Integration of sanitation policies into national development plans in the Caribbean region", which was held in Jamaica in April 2008. The workshop brought together ministers, professionals of institutions of the sector, scholars, members of civil society, non-governmental agencies, donor agencies, development agencies and the

private sector. The meeting addressed the sustainable management of wastewater and the incorporation of sanitation issues into national physical development.

C. United Nations system collaboration

29. The funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system continued their active support of Mauritius Strategy implementation and participation in the inter-agency consultative group on small island developing States, along with the regional commissions.

30. The implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity programme of work on island biodiversity continues to make an important contribution to Mauritius Strategy implementation, particularly in such areas as the control of invasive alien species, the protection and effective use of traditional knowledge and capacity-building necessary to protect island biodiversity.

31. The secretariat of the Convention unveiled a new web portal on island biodiversity (www.cbd.int/island) in 2007. It also produced a special publication on islands, *The Wealth of Islands: A Global Call for Conservation*, intended to increase public awareness of the need for island biodiversity conservation.

32. The secretariat of the Convention was part of the steering committee of the international conference entitled "The European Union and its overseas entities: strategies to counter climate change and biodiversity loss", held on Reunion Island in July 2008. The conference is the first step of an initiative that aims to enhance actions relating to climate change assessment, adaptation and mitigation, biodiversity conservation and ecosystem management for the overseas entities, most of them islands, that host a significant share of global biodiversity. It proposed new strategies and action programmes to enhance regional cooperation with small island developing States and other island States, particularly within the Global Island Partnership.

33. The secretariat continued to support the Global Island Partnership (GLISPA), including by hosting its web pages (www.cbd.int/island/glispa.shtml) and co-organizing side events at major meetings of the Convention. In September 2007, the CBD secretariat co-chaired the GLISPA strategy meeting, which adopted the GLISPA draft strategic plan for 2008-2010. The secretariat also participated in the high-level GLISPA event at which announcements were made for significant conservation commitments to protect the future of islands, with pledges of more than $20 million.

34. In addition, the Bahamas announced the Caribbean Challenge, a historic commitment made by that country together with the Dominican Republic, Grenada, Jamaica and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to protect nearly 3 million hectares of marine habitat over the next four years. This initiative complemented commitments made in other regions, including the Micronesia Challenge, whereby five Micronesian countries and territories made a shared commitment to effectively conserve at least 30 per cent of the near-shore resources and 20 per cent of the terrestrial resources by 2020; the agreement of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, the Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste and Papua New Guinea, to work together to protect coral diversity in the Coral Triangle; Fiji's commitment to establish 30 per cent of its inshore and offshore marine areas as a network of protected areas by

2020; and the launching by Kiribati of the Phoenix Islands marine protected area, the third-largest such area in the world.

35. Also noteworthy was the launch of the Sea Level Rise Foundation, which will bring resources and expertise together to support small island developing States islands and other low-lying areas in adapting to the threat of climate change.

36. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Caribbean Environment Programme has actively promoted accession to and ratification of the Protocol concerning Pollution from Land-based Sources and Activities within the framework of the Cartagena Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region. The Caribbean Environment Programme, in collaboration with the UNEP Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities, also assisted in facilitating the development and implementation of national programmes of action for the prevention of pollution from land-based sources and activities.

37. The International Maritime Organization (IMO), the UNEP Caribbean Regional Coordinating Unit and the Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Information and Training Centre for the wider Caribbean hosted five pollution prevention seminars in Saint Lucia, Barbados, Dominica, Saint Kitts and Nevis and Antigua and Barbuda on the ratification and implementation of annex V to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships. The Caribbean Environment Programme also supported the convening of a workshop on the development of a regional cooperation mechanism for response to oil spills.

38. The project entitled "Integrating watershed and coastal areas management for Caribbean small island developing States", funded by the Global Environment Facility, supports legislative and policy reforms at the island States level, capacity-building to implement those reforms and demonstration projects on key issues facing individual States. Most demonstration projects illustrate how the reduction of contaminants can address water scarcity and improve the quality of the marine environment and coastal resources. A series of studies has been conducted to guide countries in the implementation of the project.

39. Coral reef monitoring and assessments were conducted by subregional nodes in the wider Caribbean region, and a tool for the economic valuation of coral reefs was developed in collaboration with the World Resource Institute. In response to the designation of 2008 as the International Year of the Reef, the Caribbean Environment Programme organized a meeting for coral reef managers and relevant organizations to assist in planning for the celebration of the Year in the wider Caribbean, as well as to collate inputs from managers on research needs for the eleventh International Coral Reef Society symposium, held in July 2008.

40. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has been addressing the management and conservation of aquatic resources; utilization, marketing and trade of fishery products; and the development of fisheries policies. Focus is being given to the promotion of responsible fisheries sector management at the global, regional and national levels; the promotion of increased contribution of responsible fisheries and aquaculture to world food supplies and food security; and the global monitoring and strategic analysis of fisheries, with priority given to the development of databases and analysis of information.

41. The Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States continued its advocacy for small island developing States. The Office also mobilized resources with the Government of Turkey to prepare a report on enhancing Pacific connectivity in collaboration with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the UNDP Special Unit for South-South Cooperation and the South Pacific Forum secretariat. The report was approved by the ESCAP Pacific islands ministers and was recently launched in Asia and the Pacific by ESCAP.

42. The first multi-country catastrophe insurance pool, the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility, was established by the World Bank in 2007. The Facility will provide participating Governments from the Caribbean region with immediate liquidity in the event of a natural disaster. Sixteen countries purchased catastrophe insurance from the Facility for the 2007/08 season.

43. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean worked to strengthen Mauritius Strategy implementation in the Caribbean region by conducting a survey of the challenges that Caribbean small island developing States experience in implementing the Mauritius Strategy. The research findings have proven useful in assessing the capacity needs of the Caribbean region for effective Mauritius Strategy implementation.

44. Significant progress towards the operationalization of the regional coordinating mechanism to monitor Mauritius Strategy implementation in the region was also achieved. The mechanism will comprise an intergovernmental council; a technical advisory committee; a national focal point mechanism; and a secretariat. The technical advisory committee convened its first meeting in April 2008 to plan its programme of work for the next two years. Broad areas of support were identified, including institutional strengthening and capacity-building on issues of trade and the environment; information dissemination; improving and gathering data; and best practices. Attention will be given to the preparation of core documents and the establishment of a technology platform for hosting and sharing relevant information.

45. Strategic areas of intervention in support of the small island developing States agenda to be addressed include regional partnerships for sustainable waste management. This would involve technical and financial support to member countries in meeting commitments under environmental agreements to which they are signatories e.g. the Basel Convention and the oil spills protocol to the Cartagena Convention. Development of a regional water and sanitation policy would entail pursuing a regional approach to management of freshwater resources. Monitoring the impacts of tourism on the environment is another key area, with focus on developing strategies to determine the carrying capacity of the environment and the current impacts of tourism on the marine, coastal and terrestrial environments, in collaboration with the Caribbean Tourism Organization and the Association of Caribbean States.

46. The ESCAP Pacific Operations Centre has been working to support the implementation of national sustainable development strategies in the Pacific small island developing States. In 2007 it carried out a study of the planning processes in three least developed countries, the Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu, to verify compliance with the principles on national sustainable development strategies.

ESCAP proposes to collaborate with subregional organizations in providing further support for the development of national sustainable development strategies.

D. Regional and national action

47. The Pacific Island Forum secretariat completed in February 2008 the drafting of a regional action plan for implementation of the Pacific Islands Framework for Action on Climate Change 2006-2015, which was adopted by the Forum's member States in 2005. It is expected that the plan will galvanize action on climate change in the region and mobilize further technical and financial support for the initiative.

48. The Forum secretariat, with the assistance of regional experts and the Council of Regional Organizations of the Pacific, also developed a preliminary economic impact survey for the region from the perspective of climate change. The need to mainstream climate change considerations in sustainable development activities was recognized. The secretariat has therefore initiated a mainstreaming exercise with other agencies of the Council. An agreed Council-wide programme on mainstreaming has also been agreed on, including roles and responsibilities, an indicative budget, and a timeline for the implementation of mainstreaming programmes for 2008-2010.

49. National action plans for climate change are also being developed and implemented, along with a push for mainstreaming climate change into national development planning, drawing on the Pacific Islands framework for action on climate change and the associated implementation plan. A workshop on mainstreaming environmental issues was held in February 2008, which included discussion on mainstreaming climate change into national development planning.

50. Draft guidelines are currently being discussed by leading members of the Council of Regional Organizations of the Pacific in this area. National adaptation programmes of action have been developed for Kiribati, Samoa, Tuvalu and Vanuatu under the Global Environment Facility's Least Developed Country Fund. The Solomon Islands programme of action is near completion. The Global Environment Facility has approved the development of project identification forms for implementation of programmes of action for Tuvalu, Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands, Kiribati and Samoa. In addition, there has been a request to extend the process to Pacific Island countries that are not least developed countries.

51. The Pacific Alliance for Stability, approved by the Council of the Global Environment Facility in April 2008, is offering $98.6 million for the next four years for the Pacific, which includes a focus on climate change adaptation ($30.4 million) and mitigation measures ($14.7 million). One such major regional initiative approved under the Pacific Alliance for Stability is the Pacific adaptation to climate change project, one of the few projects globally to access the Special Climate Change Fund of the Global Environment Facility. In the April session of the Global Environment Facility Council, the project inception form was approved, which secures $13.1 million of adaptation funding for the region. The objective of the project is to enhance the resilience of a number of key development sectors in the Pacific islands to the adverse effects of climate change. Thirteen Pacific island countries will take part in the project.

52. The Pacific islands greenhouse gas abatement through renewable energy project, a five-year project, funded by the Global Environment Facility that started in 2007, and in which 11 countries are participating, seeks to remove the technical, institutional, financial, market, policy and awareness barriers to the widespread and productive utilization of feasible renewable energy technologies in the Pacific island countries. The project aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 33 per cent under the business-as-usual scenario by 2015.

53. Worthy of note is the adaptation fund established by the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Bali in December 2007. An adaptation fund board was elected and includes in its membership Tuvalu, Jamaica, Cuba and the Maldives. The board has met twice so far in 2008 to develop rules and procedures on ways to access the fund.

54. The Pacific Island Forum secretariat has proposed that 2009 be the Pacific Year of Climate Change. The secretariat has prepared a regional campaign for 2009, which places emphasis on raising awareness and understanding of climate change as a process with decision makers and communities by focusing on action to address the issues and challenges of today to avoid the unmanageable and manage the unavoidable. The proposed campaign objectives are to promote action on adaptation to and mitigation of climate change at the regional, national and community levels; to promote changes of behaviour; to raise awareness at the international level about the need to support adaptation to and mitigation of climate change in the region; and to reflect these concerns and needs in the outcome documents of the fifteenth Conference of the Parties.

55. In support of disaster risk reduction and disaster management, the UNDP Pacific Centre, working with partners such as the South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC), is developing and implementing Pacific Disaster net, a regional disaster risk management database providing information and baseline material on natural disasters to support better preparation and response. National action plans for mainstreaming disaster risk management have been developed for Vanuatu and the Marshall Islands through the partnership network led by SOPAC and involving the Forum secretariat, the UNDP Pacific Centre, the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) and other development partners.

56. SPREP, with the support of the Government of Australia, convened the second scientific and technical advisory committee meeting and the first steering committee meeting for the pacific regional centre for the joint implementation for the Basel and Waigani Conventions. Training workshops on the effects of maritime pollution were conducted in Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Niue, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu. Issues covered during these workshops included updating national marine pollution prevention plans to assist in environmental management and updating of the model marine pollution legislation to ensure consistency with IMO conventions.

57. The CARICOM secretariat continued its support to the process of establishment and operationalization of the regional coordinating mechanism for Mauritius Strategy implementation. CARICOM also collaborated with regional organizations and member States in the development of the large marine ecosystem project funded by the Global Environment Facility. The secretariat is also actively involved in preparation of the work programme of the Caribbean Sea Commission,

now mandated to implement the mandate of the member States of the wider Caribbean region to protect the resources of the Caribbean Sea.

58. CARICOM has supported the member States of the region in numerous activities related to climate change adaptation and mitigation. A Caribbean regional strategy on climate change is being developed, and a regional task force has been established to support Caribbean delegations in the negotiations of the post-2012 framework for the Kyoto Protocol. The secretariat provided technical support to the International Workshop on Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation in the Tourism Sector. An ad hoc working group has been established to address the management of freshwater resources in the countries of the region, particularly in the light of the impact of climate change on drought and water scarcity. The CARICOM Heads of Government at their meeting in July 2008 considered the relationships between climate change, energy and food security.

59. The CARICOM secretariat has under consideration a memorandum of understanding with the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity. The secretariat is also supporting the preparation of national biodiversity programmes and action plans. The secretariat continues to provide support to the Caribbean Disaster and Emergency Response Agency in the implementation of the comprehensive disaster management strategy and programme framework for 2007-2012.

60. Mauritius has continued making progress by preparing an initial national communication and completing a climate change action plan and a technology needs assessment. A national energy policy and action plan (2008-2025) is also being finalized, with focus on renewable energy and energy efficiency.

61. Mauritius is preparing a comprehensive national strategy for disaster risk reduction and a tsunami action plan has been submitted that includes impact mitigation and a comprehensive risk or vulnerability assessment.

62. In the area of coastal and marine resources, a regional strategic plan for the management of ballast water has been established to minimize the transfer of harmful aquatic organisms and build capacity in the region. With IMO assistance, a national seminar was held in 2008 to create awareness of the management of ballast water and to facilitate a better understanding of the technical implications of the 2004 International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships Ballast Water and Sediments. Awareness-building initiatives and baseline surveys are also under way.

63. In the area of biodiversity, programmes for the captive breeding and translocation of endemic fauna are ongoing. A seed bank project is progressing with more than 150 species of native plants seeds collected and banked. A strategic plan has been prepared for the control of invasive species in agriculture, biodiversity and health and there are ongoing control programmes to eradicate invasive weeds in the conservation management areas.

64. To further education for sustainable development, the Mauritius Institute of Education has been working on the development of a new curriculum framework for the lower secondary sector that incorporates sustainable development as a cross-cutting theme. This curriculum renewal will include the review of science and technology activities in relation to environmentally sound technologies and sustainable development.

65. Mauritius has been selected as one of the pilot countries by UNEP to develop a national programme and action plan on sustainable consumption and production. A memorandum of understanding was signed between UNEP and the Ministry of Environment in May 2007 for the elaboration of the programme by July 2008. The national programme on sustainable consumption and production for Mauritius is being finalized.

66. The national environment policy (2007) also makes provision for strategies and policy instruments to promote sustainable consumption and production. Multi-stakeholder working groups were constituted by the Ministry of Environment in order to develop the action plans on the priority areas.

67. In addressing national and regional enabling environments and poverty reduction, a bold reform programme introduced in the 2006-2007 budget has had a positive impact on gross domestic product (5.4 per cent growth in 2007). The main drivers of this new growth trajectory were tourism, financial services, construction and manufacturing, including the export processing zone. Improvements in the overall business climate, through the removal of bottlenecks in the product and factor markets and in key infrastructure, have led to a surge in investment and in capital flows.

68. However, a number of external and internal factors are still impacting adversely on the level of prices, savings and employment in the country. The recent trends in commodity prices, especially as regards oil and foodstuffs, combined with rigidities in local factor markets, are further fuelling inflation. This is seriously affecting the purchasing power of the population, particularly the lower income and vulnerable groups.

69. Recent studies have indicated that pockets of poverty prevail in some specific suburban and coastal regions in Mauritius and on the island of Rodrigues. A special committee for the eradication of absolute poverty has been established to investigate the specific needs of the poor, provide urgent assistance where needed. The overall objective of the Government is to eradicate absolute poverty within seven to 10 years.

70. The Government of Seychelles, through a project on adaptation of the water sector to climate change, proposes to tackle the water shortage problem from several angles that include promoting water conservation and infrastructural changes. Seychelles is also pursuing a project to address adaptation of the coastal zone to climate change. The goal of the proposed project is to integrate climate change concerns in the coastal zone sector planning and development frameworks and to implement long-term adaptation measures that increase the resilience of the coastal zone sector to the impact of climate change. This initiative is based on the findings of the Seychelles initial national communication, which identifies the vulnerability of coastal zones of Seychelles to climate change as one of the major issues to be addressed in the coming years.

71. A national disaster management policy has recently been finalized with UNDP support. The policy will act as a catalyst to mainstream disaster management and risk reduction activities within the broader government programmes and activities. The policy will also be cross-referenced with other national policies such as the land-use planning policy. The infrastructural development policy for outer islands,

which governs method of construction to withstand adverse weather conditions, was approved in 2007.

72. Seychelles remains actively engaged in the intergovernmental coordination group which is working to establish the Indian Ocean tsunami warning system. The system is expected to become operational by the end of 2009, enabling all countries affected by the 2004 tsunami to access and share data pertaining to tsunami risks and warning.

73. In keeping with a long-term objective of the Government of Seychelles to create a maximum number of marine protected areas in order to assist in the sustainability of inshore marine resources and maintain marine biodiversity, six areas have been designated, covering an area of 3,457 hectares. Marine protected areas have proven very successful not only in preserving fish stocks but in improving the spawning potential and population parameters such as reproduction and growth.

74. There is an acknowledged need to develop capacity for sustainable land management and self-generating agricultural ecosystems by building on communal tenure systems and traditional land-use planning and practices for crop, livestock and aquaculture production, taking into account the increasing competition for land resources by tourism, urbanization and other activities. A Geographic Information System project to better manage agricultural land was initiated and will be completed by December 2008.

75. In October 2007 Seychelles launched its agricultural development strategy for 2007-2011, focusing on land-based food production systems in which Seychelles has a comparative advantage. The strategy sets targets for the production of various foods and identifies major issues associated with land, inputs and supplies, agricultural infrastructure, policy and institutional support, legislation, marketing, information and human resource development. In May 2008 Seychelles further launched its food security strategy for 2008-2011, using the agricultural development strategy as a platform for action.

76. Concern has been expressed at the spread of alien invasive species and climate change as continuing challenges to the biodiversity of Seychelles. The Government is in the process of revising legislation to ensure that the country's biodiversity is maintained. A project funded by the Global Environment Facility has been initiated to address the issues of biological security and climate change. There is a need to strengthen indigenous capacity to implement such projects. There are many challenges resulting from the lack of human capacity and lack of financial resources to implement environmental programmes. The importance attached to addressing climate change effectively is reflected in the initiative of the President of Seychelles to launch the Sea Level Rise Foundation, a platform where small island developing States can share knowledge about climate change issues.

E. International support

77. The Government of Australia is committed to a new and elevated engagement with its Pacific island partners. Pacific partnerships for development are central to Australia's new engagement in the region. A strong supporter of the Millennium Development Goals, the Government of Australia is determined to increase the

quantity and the quality of Australian official development assistance and will continue to increase overseas aid with the goal of providing 0.5 per cent of gross national income by 2015/16. Emphasis will be given to investment in key sectors such as health, basic education, water, sanitation, environment and climate change. Australia will continue to work closely with developing countries, particularly in the Pacific.

78. The Pacific partnerships for development will be underpinned by principles including mutual respect and partnership, recognizing the principle of country-led development and mutual responsibility, with sharper focus on accountability. Australia has commenced discussions with Papua New Guinea and Samoa on establishing partnership frameworks.

79. A package of Pacific-focused initiatives will be drawn on in establishing Pacific partnerships for development, which links to key areas of the Mauritius Strategy. A Pacific land programme will help reduce conflict over land and make land more readily available for development. A Pacific regional infrastructure facility will support better maintained and more reliable basic infrastructure in Pacific island countries, greater local employment opportunities for youth and associated improvements in rural service delivery and business costs. A Pacific public sector capacity initiative will support a better-trained, more effective public sector to plan and implement new development policies in the Pacific, with stronger linkages between Australian and Pacific counterpart institutions.

80. Australia is also committed to closer cooperation with New Zealand in the planning and implementation of Australia's development assistance in the Pacific and to working closely with the multilateral development banks. A harmonized programme is being developed which includes collaboration on baseline data on development and governance indicators. A recently agreed Cook Islands joint country strategy for 2008-2017 between the Cook Islands Government, the Australian Agency for International Development and the New Zealand Agency for International Development is an example of this. Australia will also invest $150 million Australian dollars over three years, with $35 million Australian dollars in 2008/09, to meet high priority climate adaptation needs in vulnerable countries in the Pacific.

81. Denmark continues to support the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action through activities undertaken in the Pacific. The focus has been on promoting renewable energy development and energy efficiency. Denmark granted $1.9 million to SOPAC to implement the Pacific islands energy policies and strategic action planning project, which will be completed in 2008. The project supports improved capacity in 14 Pacific island developing States to develop practical national energy policies. Support to Small Island development States has also been channelled through Danish non-governmental organizations for activities focused on technical assistance and a knowledge bank on renewable energy.

82. Norway has allocated 2.5m NOK to the project "Many Strong Voices". The project, which links research and advocacy with a view to improving knowledge and skills for adaptation to climate change, has enabled exchange of competence and knowledge on developing coastal communities' capacity for dealing with climate change between small island developing States communities and communities in the Arctic. Some 16 Arctic and island countries are currently actively involved in the

project. The first year of the project is now successfully completed. Norway intends to further support this initiative.

83. Norway has also allocated 36m kroner to the UNEP/Grid Arendal continental shelf programme. The programme aims at providing Small Island Developing States in particular with the data necessary to make a claim to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf for an extension of the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles.

84. The Government of Iceland sponsored a high-level round table and business and investment forum on international cooperation for sustainable development in Caribbean small island developing States in Barbados in March 2008. The meeting identified areas of mutual interest to increase cooperation, namely the sustainable use of natural resources, climate change, renewable energy resources, fisheries management, capacity-building and the advancement of women. The meeting, which was attended by 16 small island developing States in the Caribbean, the Government of Iceland, regional intergovernmental organizations, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and several United Nations programmes and agencies, set the basis for closer cooperation and the development of partnerships between Iceland and the Caribbean region.

85. The Commonwealth secretariat, in collaboration with UNEP and the Alliance of Small Island States, and with technical support from the Foundation for International Environmental Law and Development, organized a workshop to build the capacity of small island developing State climate negotiators in Windsor, United Kingdom in May 2008.

86. The workshop was intended to deepen the understanding of climate negotiators of the issues being addressed in the current negotiating process, and wider political initiatives around the negotiations; to develop a list of the key technical information gaps that small States need to address to enhance their participation in the negotiating process; to consider the priority outcomes for small States in the climate change negotiations; and to develop a forward-looking strategy and practical plan of action to support small States in the negotiating process. The workshop responded to the need for strengthened negotiating capacity expressed by the small island developing States, particularly in respect of ongoing climate change negotiations.

87. The International Ocean Institute continued forging partnerships in support of sustainable development of small island developing States. A key contribution was training conducted through the Institute's network of operational centres. The courses offered included a training programme on ocean governance. The Institute also continued to offer the Dianielle De St. Jorre scholarship which allows one woman from a small island developing State to pursue a marine-related course at the tertiary level. Through its OceanLearn programme, the Institute works to build partnerships to deliver education and capacity-building in the sustainable management of ocean resources. Among the successful courses offered in 2007 were a workshop on responsible fisheries in Fiji, a training course on the development and management of marine protected areas in the Solomon Islands and a marine protected areas capacity-building programme in Fiji.

88. The Institute also conducts a women and youth sea programme to enhance the participation and capacity of these groups in ocean and coastal affairs. Projects include a training initiative concerning alternative sources of livelihood for women

in the Pacific and an a website for children. Other programmes include a community-based resource management and governance project on Gau Island, Fiji, and training courses on ecosystem dynamics and maritime boundary delimitation offered through the host institute in Cuba.

III. Conclusions and recommendations

89. **There are clear indications that concerted efforts are being made at the national, regional and international levels to further implementation of the Mauritius Strategy. Continued support for the development and strengthening of national sustainable development strategies will enhance national capacity for more effective and coherent development administration. In this regard, support for the design and implementation of national sustainable development strategies in small island developing States will continue in the Pacific, and the possibility of pursuing similar projects in the other regions will be actively explored.**

90. **Further work on the design of a framework for mainstreaming and monitoring the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy will be pursued, promoting its coordinated implementation with existing development strategies and plans, including the Millennium Development Goals. Particular attention will be given to the challenges of capacity which small island developing States continue to face in their effort to implement the Mauritius Strategy.**

91. **Significant attention was given in the past year to the increasingly grave impact of climate change on the well-being and security of small island developing States. The decision of the General Assembly, in paragraph 12 of its resolution 62/191, to review at its sixty-fifth session progress made in addressing the vulnerabilities of small island developing States through implementation of the Mauritius Strategy is therefore both relevant and timely. Substantial attention will be given in the coming year to preparation for this review.**